

## Rep. Doris Matsui Manages Rule Setting Debate for Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2010

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Congresswoman's Provision to Protect Cruise Ship Passengers is Adopted in Final Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-05) spoke on the House floor on behalf of the House Committee on Rules to advocate for passage of the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2010. Congresswoman Matsui's statement, as prepared for delivery, is below:

"I want to thank both Chairman Oberstar and Chairman Thompson for the good work their committees have done on this bill. Thanks to these two committees, we are here today to strengthen the Coast Guard's ability to implement its responsibilities. It is critical that the Coast Guard has the necessary funds, resources, and personnel to carry out the missions we need it to conduct.

"H.R. 3619 increases the authorized end strength for military personnel in the Coast Guard by 1,500 to 47,000 personnel. It will also permanently increase to 6,700 the allowable number of officers in the service. The legislation also establishes marine safety as a core mission of the Coast Guard. It responds directly to the many shortcomings in Coast Guard acquisition efforts that the Committee has examined over the last several years.

"For example, it prohibits the Coast Guard's use of a private sector lead systems integrator, requires the Coast Guard to develop life-cycle cost estimates, and prohibits contractor self-certification. The Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2010 will strengthen our nation's Coast Guard, by making important investments and key

changes now, the benefits of which we will see for years to come.

"This bill also includes legislation that I authored earlier this year and I want to thank Mr. Oberstar and Chairman Cummings for including this important language into this bill. There is an urgent need for the reforms I have outlined in the Cruise Vessel Safety and Security Act. For far too long, American families have unknowingly been at risk. Currently, cruise ships operate under foreign flags of convenience and are not required under U.S. law to report crimes occurring outside of our territorial waters.

"Leaving our territorial waters does not mean that cruise ships should be allowed to operate without basic laws that protect American citizens. My legislation requires that that all crimes that occur aboard cruise ships be reported to the Coast Guard and to the FBI. Without proper screening processes and accountability these reprehensible and violent acts will be allowed to continue. Under the status quo, criminals are left unpunished, and victims are left to fend for themselves.

"Unclear lines of jurisdiction are no longer an excuse, for risking the safety of the millions of Americans who board cruise ships each year. I first became aware of the need for increased protections for Americans when one of my constituents, Laurie Dishman, wrote to me for help in April of 2006. Laurie was the victim of a sexual assault while on a cruise vacation. She was given no assistance by the cruise line in properly securing evidence of the assault. No assistance in identifying her attacker - who was an employee of the cruise ship. No assistance in prosecuting the crime once back on shore. Devastated, Laurie reached out to me.

"I immediately called for hearings on this issue, and began to work on the legislation that is now a part of this Coast Guard authorization bill. The Congressional hearings made apparent the gross inadequacies of current cruise safety provisions. Because of these hearings, it was discovered there has not been a single conviction of an accused rape on a cruise ship in recent history. With ongoing news coverage of recent rapes on cruise ships, it is clear that legislation is both urgent and necessary.

"Many of my colleagues have come to me with similar stories of constituents who have gone missing, been sexually attacked, or gone days, weeks, years without getting resolution. My legislation establishes stringent new standards to ensure the safety and security of passengers on cruise vessels.

"Its reforms include requiring that vessel personnel be able to preserve evidence of crimes committed on the vessels and provide appropriate medical treatment to the victims of sexual assaults. Security, safety, and accountability must all be strengthened to hold criminals accountable and end the cycle of serious crimes on cruise ships.

"As this crucial legislation moves forward it serves as proof to victims of cruise crimes that progress is being made, towards ensuring the safety of all Americans abroad. Laurie Dishman is here today to witness her cause move forward, and I want to thank her for her extraordinary courage and leadership.

"This has been a long, difficult road for all cruise victims and their families. These reforms are truly common-sense and are even supported by the Cruise Line Industry Association. That is why this measure is a victory in the fight for

cruise passengers' rights.

"In much the same way the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act is a major victory for people across our country who depend on the Coast Guard to keep their families safe. Passage of the Coast Guard Reauthorization of 2010 will allow many important reforms to be enacted and will help protect Americans across the nation. Coast Guard Reauthorization is long overdue. I urge my colleagues to vote in support of this rule and the underlying legislation."

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